THE REDBIRD WORD

Volume 100 Issue 2 **Celebrating 100 years!**

Alton High School, 4200 Humbert Rd., Alton, Ill. 62002, Room B136

Table of contents

Checkmate
3

Dreams Defy Odds
5

Marching Forwards
9

Strings & Leaves
10

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ABOUT THE COVER

Tatler photographer Lucy Rose snaps photos of Redbird Nest leaders, Oren Asher and Grace Massey, as they cheer on the student section during the Sept. 12 varsity football game against Triad. Each game has a theme for the student section assigned by leaders. In honor of Military Night, Nest members all wore camouflage.

Photo by Lily Waltz, Features Editor

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Then Vs. Now

The Redbird Word Celebrates 100th Anniversary

By Finn Lile, News Editor

The Redbird Word has been a platform for students to use their voices and spread news about what happens around the school since 1925. While images in the 1925 issue were sparse, the newest issue published in 2025 has pictures in surplus that range from sports photography to infographics.

With all the work that went into each issue, the different staff members had to work very closely together in order to make everything run smoothly. This environment led to some, like former English teacher and The Redbird Word Adviser Annice Brave making important friendships with her students in the long run.

"I always tell students 'You enter the room as a student and hopefully you'll leave as a friend,' and I meant that," Brave said. "I'm still close to several of my students and we're still in touch. At least once or twice a year they let me know what's going on with their lives and I've been to weddings and baby showers, that's what's really important."

Former 2012-13 Editor-in-Chief, Jacob Leady, also shared this sentiment and said he believes that The Redbird Word gave him opportunities to make connections that he otherwise wouldn't have made.

"It's going to sound cliché, but the connections with my fellow classmates helped me form [other connections] within the school, if I had taken physics I wouldn't have had a reason to go talk to all these people," Leady said.

Having so many students working together on a publication like The Redbird Word gives opportunities for each student to have a different standpoint on each individual task. Brave said there were students that enjoyed writing and cared about it, but there were also students that took the class less than seriously.

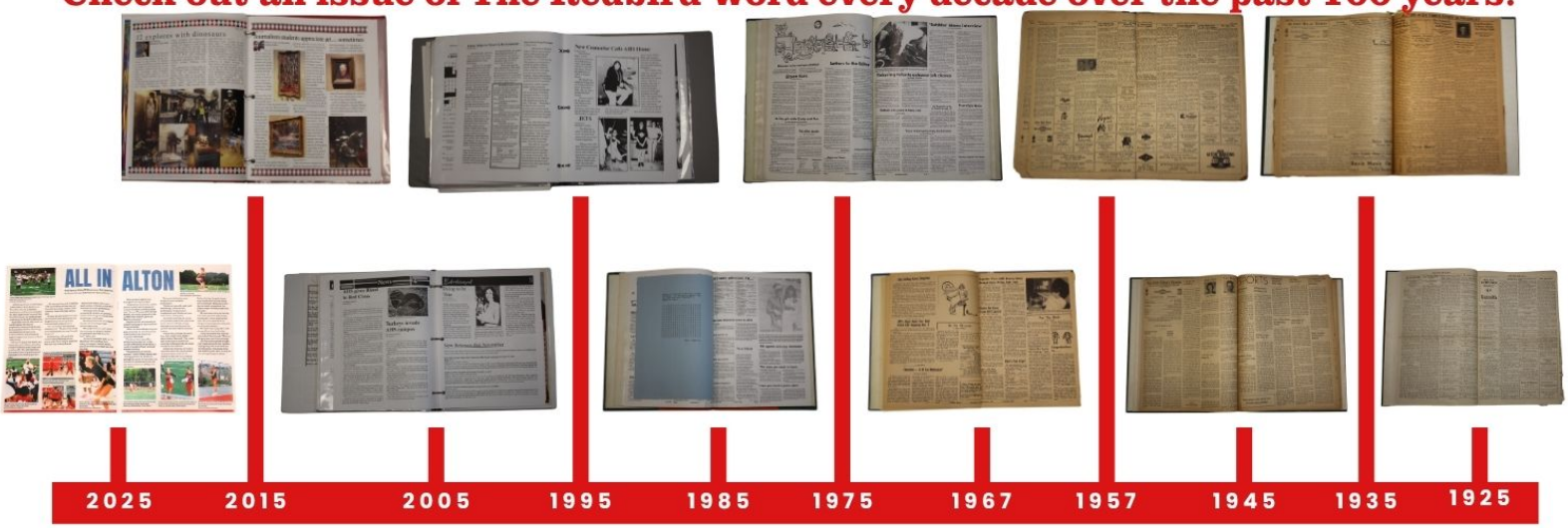
"The easiest part is working with kids who really want to become better communicators, and when they realize the importance of that, then they're willing to put in the effort to produce a good product," Brave said. "I had years where they just wanted to fool around, so if I wasn't at the top of my game, sometimes things would get into the paper that shouldn't have been there."

During the 2012-13 school year, Leady said he had editors that were particularly invested in their jobs and helped make his responsibilities easier.

"If everyone you have on your team working with you is on top of their game, it is a lot easier than you would think," Leady said. "I had good editors underneath me that I didn't have to hound about getting their work done, and they stayed on top of the reporters for me. If I hadn't been able to rely on my editors, it would have been a lot harder."

Even though the tools, format and quality have changed in many ways throughout the years, the one thing that remains the same is that at the heart of The Redbird Word, the staff and everyone they interview are all working together to have everyone's voices be heard in a place that will be an official record for years in the future.

Check out an issue of The Redbird Word every decade over the past 100 years!



Chess Club Makes a Return at Alton High School

By Lydia Copeland, Social Media Manager

After multiple years of absence, Chess Club has made a comeback aiming to encourage students to join them in playing, learning and competing in all things chess.

The club is run by the coach of the Alton Middle School club, Ilyas Kantar, who began running the Chess Club at the middle school in the fall of 2022. When Kantar began working for the Alton School District in 2021, there was no high school Chess Club.

"As some members of the middle school team moved up to the high school, I learned that there was no team for them to join," Kantar said. "I spoke with Superintendent, Elaine Kane, and she supported the idea of starting a Chess Club at the high school."

The goal of the club is to both help players advance their skills and introduce unfamiliar players to the game. While new players are being taught how to play, students who have an understanding of the game are able to play against each other while receiving advice from their coach.

"As with anything new, I was hoping that there would be interest in joining the Chess Club," Kantar said. "We recently had our first meeting which was well attended. I hope to continue to build the club with more students, to have fun, to help advance players of any level and to watch the members of the club grow as individuals and as a team."

Chess is a game that requires critical thinking and strategizing skills. The inviting atmosphere of the club has encouraged students with no chess experience to try something new.

"Everything about the game was completely new to me," junior Niyah Bobbitt said. "However, I approached it with a positive mindset and confidence, ready to learn and take on the challenge. Growing up, I often saw others playing chess, but I never imagined myself getting involved. Eventually, I decided to step out of my comfort zone and give it a try—and I'm really glad I did."

Kantar also hopes to eventually take the team to some regional competitions. This would provide students with the opportunity to play against other schools and widen their skill sets.

"They [Kantar] said they might do competitions which I've never done before," junior member Jillian Dwiggins said. "I think it would be really cool to play in person with a bunch of other people."

Meetings are held weekly where all students are welcome regardless of their prior experience. Chess Club meets every Thursday in the library from 3:45-5:10 p.m.

Freshman Robert Fontenot and junior Jillian Dwiggins compete against each other in a game of chess.
Photo by Lydia Copeland, Social Media Manager

Chess Club coach Ilyas Kantar introduces new members to the club
Photo by Lydia Copeland, Social Media Manager

Checkmate

Shining Athletes

Alton Recognizes Two Students for Outstanding Athletics

By Kyridas Orr, Sports Editor

Whether it's on the field, court or in the classroom, senior athletes Anna Larson and Lucile Lehmann have proven to be a stand out. Larson was chosen as Smoothie Kings Sept. student athlete of the month, while Lehmann was chosen for Smoothie Kings Sept. athlete of the month.

Being selected to be the athlete of the month shouldn't be taken lightly. There is a nomination to be chosen and very few do get chosen.

"Head Coaches each season nominate candidates each month from their program," Athletic Director, Christopher Kusnerick, said.

They choose an athlete once a month throughout the school year. Kusnerick goes through and compares the candidates nominated by their coaches and tries to allow for each sport to hopefully get recognition once in the school year. The athlete also has to be on the varsity team for the sport they play.

Larson was selected for student athlete of the month. Larson joined tennis her freshmen year and has continued to play under Head Coach, Jesse Macias, each year.

"Playing doubles with different girls has been so much fun, and playing tennis with other seniors and my closest friends has brought us so close together," Larson said.

At Alton High, tennis is more than a sport for most of these girls. It's a program built on sisterhood and positivity. The tennis team has traveled to a lot of tournaments and matches.

"We travel to grow our playing experience and also do a lot of bonding activities," Larson said. "It's just been the best part of my high school experience."

For Alton's athlete of the month, Lehmann was selected for girls' volleyball. Lehmann has been playing volleyball for seven years now and throughout all of her high school years. This is the first time Lehmann has been chosen for athlete of the month.

"I am very appreciative, and I have worked hard to get to where I am," Lehmann said.

Lehmann serves as the head captain of the varsity team and plays the crucial role of libero, leading both through leadership and exceptional defensive skills on the court. Her decisions, reflexes and determination to be better shows her dedication for herself and the team.

"I am very appreciative that I am a captain for my girls' volleyball team, and that I can help lead the younger team as well as mine," Lehmann said.

Throughout the school year, both Larson and Lehmann continue to show what it means to be student-athletes, balancing academics, leadership and athletic excellence.

As the fall season progresses, the Redbirds will look to their October Athletes of the Month for continued inspiration both on and off the court.

Senior Anna Larson swings at the tennis ball aiming for a point.
Photo by Haelee Moyer

Senior Lucile Lehmann passes the ball during a game against Cahokia.
Photo by Caitlin Derr

Dreams Defy Odds

Upward Bound Survives, and So Do Students' Dreams

By Heaven Everage, Sports Editor

Seniors Daija Merrifield and D'Marlo Reed visit Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wi. during a 2025 summer college trip with fellow Upward Bound students.
Photo Courtesy of Staci Herron

For some students at Alton High School, Upward Bound is more than just a program. It's a lifeline. That lifeline was suddenly at risk last school year when news broke that federal funding for TRIO programs might be cut.

TRIO refers to a group of federally funded initiatives that help low-income and first-generation students pursue higher education. Upward Bound is one of those programs, and when TRIO funding is threatened, the academic support, mentorship and college preparation students rely on can disappear.

"We were facing the possibility of losing all our support," Upward Bound senior Daija Merrifield said. "I was nervous about college applications, scholarships … everything. It was hard to imagine going through that process without Upward Bound."

At Alton High, the results of this support speak for themselves: a 100% graduation rate among Upward Bound participants. Program leaders and students say that success is no accident.

"Our students rely on consistent advising, college prep and academic support," Upward Bound Manager, Staci Herron, said. "The possible erasure of TRIO would have meant no mentors, no guidance and no encouragement to help them stay on track."

For many students, the potential loss felt deeply personal.

"It's really my key to getting into college," Upward Bound junior D'Marlo Reed said. "Without it, I don't know what I would do."

Reed first learned about Upward Bound in eighth grade through Talent Search, which is another similar program, and from family members who were alumni. Since joining, he's taken part in academic workshops, summer programs and free college campus visits, including a trip to one of his top choices, Texas A&M.

"I've learned how to make a resume, how to talk in front of people and just how to prepare for what's coming," Reed said. "It's made a big difference."

Fortunately, the funding scare ended with good news. Alton High School's TRIO programs were renewed at the same level as the previous year, ensuring that no services would be lost.

"We were relieved," Herron said. "We didn't gain more funding, but we didn't lose any either. That means our students can continue getting the support they need."

Merrifield took on a leadership role this past summer guiding her fellow students through a Shark Tank-style group project. She said the experience taught her just how much the program has shaped her growth.

"I wanted to be the person my mentors were for me," Merrifield said. "We're not just working on academics. We're building confidence, building futures."

She credits the program, and Herron's guidance, for keeping her focused on scholarship applications and college deadlines.

"Upward Bound will be one of the main reasons I get all the scholarships I need," Merrifield said. "Ms. Herron stays on me about every deadline."

The program has helped students grow both academically and personally.

"It's not just about school," Reed said. "It helps us become leaders."

As both students look to the future, they say one thing is clear — programs like Upward Bound aren't just helpful, they're essential. Their belief is echoed by those who lead the program.

"I hope more people learn what TRIO really is," Herron said. "It's not just a summer camp. It's a program that changes lives."

The boys' varsity golf team heads off to the Dick Gerber Invitational on Aug. 29-30 at Timber Lakes Golf Course in Staunton, Ill.
Photo Courtesy of @altonredbirdsgolf on Instagram

Junior Donavon Ducey Lifts Varsity Boys' Golf at Edwardsville Invitational

By Raye Holmes, Social Media Manager

The boys' varsity golf team currently consists of seven players. During the fifth game of the season, an unexpected hit was made. One player, junior Donavon Ducey, hit a hole-in-one.

The hole-in-one happened on Aug. 29, during the Edwardsville Dick Gerber Invitational at Timber Lakes Golf Course. The tournament was on hole 18 when he made the hit.

"There are always stakes at play during tournament play," Head Boys' Golf Coach, Dylan Dudley, said. "Donovan has always done a good job of making his success about the team which in return benefits himself."

Ducey wasn't the only player on the team that benefited by the sudden hole-in-one. Ducey's teammate, junior Nolan Snyder, said the unexpected play shifted the feel of the tournament.

"It [the hole-in-one] benefited a lot because it put everyone in a good mood for the day," Snyder said. "It got everyone excited and ready to play golf."

Ducey said that although his summers are all about baseball, when the school year starts, everything transitions to golf and how he can improve. The team of boys practice every day when they don't have matches or tournaments. They also put in work on weekends to further improve their skills.

"As we try and teach our boys, we try to hit towards the middle of the green," Dudley said. "He made a good decision on yardage and club, putting himself in the best position to make a par. With a little luck involved, he made a hole-in-one."

Ducey started his freshmen year and advanced to varsity sophomore year. Ducey constantly brings a positive attitude to the team.

"I hadn't really played golf with him [Ducey] before," Snyder said. "This is my first year playing golf and being on varsity, especially with Donavon. He's just always smiling and always happy. ... It just gives a calm environment to play in."

Hole-in-One

Junior Donavon Ducey holds the ball after his successful hole-in-one.
Photo Courtesy of @altonredbirdsgolf on Instagram

Homecoming spirit

Homecoming Week Unifies the Alton Community

By Lily Waltz, Features Editor

Not only does homecoming week bring the Alton School District together, but also the community of Alton as a whole. Homecoming is a longstanding tradition that consists of several events to celebrate school spirit.

Homecoming week officially began Monday, Oct. 6 kicking off with the spirit week theme "dress your shoe size." The week leads up to the football game on Friday, Oct. 10 and ends with the homecoming dance on Saturday, Oct. 11. Spirit week themes give students in the entire school district an opportunity to participate and show their school spirit.

"Spirit week gives students a fun way to unite by collectively dressing up each day and also showing creativity with the different themes," Senior Class President, Naeem West, said. "It gives us something to look forward to and participate in."

These themes were chosen a little differently this year because of the new establishment of Student Council advisory representatives. This gave all students of Alton High the opportunity to decide what themes they wanted by voting during their advisories.

"We really wanted to try and have something for everybody"... "and we tried to come up with things that are fun and allowed for creative expression for all students," Student Council sponsor and Librarian, Fiona Griswold, said.

With the lead up of spirit week comes the annual pep rally, which will occur in the main gym on Thursday, Oct. 9. Students will be organized by their grade and class color, and have the opportunity to play various games and show support for the Alton High School football team.

"I'm really looking forward to the pep rally, and the more people we have, the more we will be able to create energy and show support for our team," Redbird Nest President, Grace Massey, said.

To help showcase Redbird pride, members of Student Council have also recruited local businesses to "paint the town red" in which they were asked to decorate their businesses in red. To build up excitement and eagerness before the big game, the annual homecoming parade will start at Alton Middle School at 5:30 p.m. today, leading through the streets of Alton until their arrival at the Public School Stadium at West Elementary.

"We have a lot of alumni that live in the area, and so we're trying to encourage the community to come out, line the streets and enjoy the parade," Griswold said. "And then also to show support for the school, football team and everyone involved."

The Redbirds will play the homecoming game tonight against Belleville West High School at 7 p.m., and the team has high hopes for success. Team Captain and starting middle linebacker, Brayden Drew, said he is looking forward to representing his team and school at the game.

AHS Student Council presents "Glitz, Glam, & Jazz" as the 2025 Homecoming dance theme. *Graphic by Fiona Griswold/Kristi Doering*

AHS dance and cheer team unite practice their routine for Homecoming.
Photo by Lily Waltz, Features Editor

Sophomore Aidan Swogger practices defensive strategies for the Homecoming game on Oct.10.
Photo by Lily Waltz, Features Editor

Senior Olivia Malenic leads both dance and cheer team in their routine.
Photo by Lily Waltz, Features Editor

"I think it's going to be a great game, and our team has a lot of fight going into it," Drew said. "We really want to win, so this game just brings the season together from a bit of a rough start, and we're going to give it everything we have."

Not only does the school community encourage the team, but the community of Alton as whole. Seeing the unity of the city of Alton in the stands is what motivates the team to bring home a win.

"It brings my spirit up and makes me want to put on a show for everyone," Drew said. "It also makes us want to show the hard work that we've put in throughout the year, and show how great we can be."

Students are highly encouraged to support the team and participate in the theme for the game which is Red Out. Massey is ready and excited to lead her peers and community in keeping the school spirit alive.

"My plan is to stay on top of social media posts so everyone participates in the theme and hypes up the football team," Massey said. "I am also making sure to start chants more periodically, keep people involved and have more interactive opportunities."

Another special surprise going into the game is the merging of the cheer and dance team, as they have been working together on a routine to perform at half time. Senior Olivia Malenic is looking forward to this special moment in her last year at Alton High.

"Being able to perform at homecoming is special to me because before this year, dance team didn't get to perform at football games, so it is a way for us to showcase our team and our four seniors," Malenic said.

With the last event of the week being the homecoming dance on Saturday, Oct. 11, there are many moving parts to planning such a large event that students do not see. The planning begins almost immediately after the school year starts as it is one of the two largest events planned by Student Council.

"One of the big things is picking the theme for the year, and then once we have that, then that drives all the decorations and all the other aspects that go into it," Griswold said.

Students can expect to see a major makeover in the main gym, with the theme being "Glitz, Glam, and Jazz" this year, which was also decided through Advisory representatives.

"This theme is somewhat off-brand for us, so I'm really looking forward to seeing everyone come together for one of our biggest events of the year," West said.

As the week draws to a close, students and supporters are highly encouraged to carry on their Redbird pride to tonight's game, filling the stands in red. "Glitz, Glam, & Jazz" will be awaiting students on the dance floor tomorrow night at 7 p.m., as another year of memories are to be made within the Alton High School community.

Marching Forward

Alton High Welcomes New Director for Marching 100

By Victoria Strowmatt, Copy Editor
Edited by Raye Holmes, Social Media Manager

During the summer, Matt Chesner became the new band director for the Alton Marching 100. The program is now led by Head Band and Marching 100 Director, Chesner, and assistant director and percussion instructor Chuck Willard.

Chesner has been leading the band section since their music camp they had this summer. Marching 100 music and band camp happens yearly in the summer starting in late July.

During band camp, the students learn their field show. This year's show is titled "Amazing." The theme of the show is trapped in a maze.

"I first met Chesner on July 15 for music camp," Head Color Guard Section Leader, Kinsey Galliher, said. "It was a weird feeling, because I was so used to seeing Korte [former band director] it kind of made me sad in a way knowing that Korte would never be teaching us again."

For students like Galliher, this change brings mixed emotions as they get used to new leadership.

This shift represents turning point in Chesner's life. Before Chesner became a band director for Alton, he lived in Florida. He returned to the Madison County region to accept the Head Band Director position.

"I was looking for a job that was closer to home," Chesner said. "Florida was a really cool experience, but I'm a lot closer to my friends and family here in Illinois. "

Before he moved to Florida he was a long-term substitute as a band director for a middle school. After that, Chesner worked as a band director in Rockford, Ill. where he directed middle and high school band students.

On Saturday, Sept. 27, the Marching 100 placed second at the Panther Marching Band Festival. They will perform at Bands of America Super Regional in St. Louis, Mo. on Oct. 18, then again at the Greater Saint Louis Marching Band festival in Belleville, Ill. on Oct. 25.

Chesner said that he is committed to the future of the Marching 100 marking a different era for the band. As Chesner settles to his new role, the Marching 100 continues its tradition— now with a new voice.

Marching 100 Director, Matt Chesner, conducts the band during a varsity football game at the Alton Public School Stadium.
Photo by Kate Wilson

Head Drum Major, Samuel Caughran, conducts the pep band at a football game.
Photo by Lily Waltz, Features Editor

Strings & Leaves

Alton High's Orchestra Preforms at The Nature Institute

By Juliette Meza, Photo & Art Editor

Under the trees of The Nature Institute (TNI), The Symphonic Orchestra kicked off their In Harmony with Nature concert, blending music and nature together as a part of their annual concert.

Every year, the Symphonic Orchestra performs at TNI. Junior Chasity Lee, a member of the symphonic orchestra, has been practicing alongside her fellow students. The students have months to practice their music before they ever rehearse it together as a whole.

"We got the music last May before school ended," Lee said. "We have had it over the summer to practice and look over it."

Orchestra Director Laura Plummer began working with students on the concert material early in the school year. She scheduled rehearsals in advance and organized symphonic orchestra practices to ensure students knew the music before concert day came.

"We start rehearsing the music as soon as we start school," Plummer said. "We also have weekly after school rehearsals for an hour and a half."

When Plummer chooses the music and the theme of the concert, she says she tries to pick fun themes that tie into nature. When picking a theme she considers the sound and visual effects to add in and other factors. This year she picked a theme that relates to nature at TNI.

"Last year our theme was Fright Night, which had Halloween themed pieces that were a lot of fun to play in an orchestra with different sound effects, like the infamous Psycho motif," Plummer said. "This year our theme is Stories in the Woods"

The concert has become a major event for the orchestra classes, giving students the opportunity to perform outside the traditional auditorium setting. Plummer said it allows students to fully enjoy the music and experience of performing outdoors while connecting with the community.

"The TNI In Harmony with Nature concert is my favorite performance of the year," Plummer said. "The sunset overlooking the Mississippi River on a fall evening is stunning, and we love performing for a wider audience from the community."

Plummer said she enjoys putting this concert together each year, even when there have been minor struggles. Plummer said the event typically runs smoothly due to preparation and simple adjustments.

"Last year it was very hot, which was hard on our string instruments," Plummer said. "A slight breeze is nice once in a while, but we have to use clothespins to keep the music from blowing around."

While there was a ticket cost of $6 for attending the concert, the proceeds do not go to the orchestra department. Instead of keeping the proceeds, all of these donations go to TNI.

"There is a charge for the concert and all proceeds go to The Nature Institute," Plummer said. "We are thrilled to be able to support The Nature Institute."

If you missed their annual concert at The Nature Institute on September 26 at 6:00 p.m., make sure to attend it next year.

Makenzie Rayfield announces the next piece the orchestra will be playing.
Photo By Juliette Meza, Photo & Art Editor

Junior Aubrey Stackpole visits the Western Illinois University table at the College and Career Fair on Friday, Sept. 26
Photo by Raye Holmes, Social Media Manager

Future Exploration

Alton High Hosts an Event to Help Students Plan for the Future

By Raye Holmes, Social Media Manager
Edited by Lily Waltz, Features Editor

As students filled the gym on Sept. 26, rows of colleges and career reps lined the gym waiting for them. The goal was to inspire students to think about life after high school.

Alton High School's career fair invited 35 college and career reps to campus. The goal was to help students figure out their life after high school since there are many different options students can choose from no matter what they want to do with their life.

"I think our goal is different for each grade level," assistant principal Jordan Anderson said. Anderson oversees the Guidance Department. "For seniors, it's kind of to get them in the headspace that they need to make a decision soon...for our freshmen, it's their first experience, and it helps them kind of realize what is out there."

Anderson has been helping host this event since 2018. While Anderson handles the logistics at the highschool, the National Council of Negro Woman [NCNW] has volunteered to do the recruiting process.

Anderson said since she has been doing this for years she has built relationships with college representatives which leads them wanting to come back. The NCNW has also been helpful in inviting a variety of colleges and career opportunities for students to explore.

"The reason for the college and career fair is that one of our organization's goals is education," Dr. Sheila Ward, NCNW program chair, said. "The college and career fair provides a platform for learning about career paths, internships and job opportunities. The fairs are valuable for exploring a wide range of career and educational options, making connections with potential employers and getting feedback in a low-stakes environment."

Each year, the goals change to fit each students' needs and to help them get closer to making their final decision. This event immerses students into an environment that can lead to them to creating bonds with their future and help make the decision process simpler.

"We want the students to build connections and make a positive impression on potential future employers and mentors," Ward said. "And learn about different job roles internship possibilities, graduate programs and majors that might not have been considered before."

Senior Dayshawn Miller gets his hair cut by Anderson's Classic Barber Shop.
Photo by Raye Holmes, Social Media Manager

Editorial

OPINION: America's Desensitization to Violence is Complicit to the Ongoing Lack of Public Safety - The Nation has Become Comfortable with Violence

By The Redbird Word Staff

Recent shootings, school lockdowns or even late incidents of police brutality are met with the minimal shrug and scroll. A study done by the Pew Research Center shows that only 38% of adults actually pay attention to the news, simply due to high levels of fatigue. America is only engaged and disturbed when violence is glorified and undeniably overrepresented throughout the media.

The nation as a whole paused in shock to mourn the loss of Charlie Kirk as he was shot and killed at a public speaking event held at Utah Valley University. However, on the very same day, citizens tended to turn their blind eye to the Evergreen High School shooting which left two students in critical condition. A similar reaction occurred two weeks prior when 21 people were injured and two children died in a mass school shooting in Minneapolis, Minn.

Google Trend showed that on Sept. 10 alone, the day of the Evergreen shooting and assassination of Kirk, searches including Evergreen High School compared to Charlie Kirk were 1 to one hundred. While this all may be ultimately shocking - it is a recurring background noise to most.

The previous assassination of former Minnesota Democratic Representative Melissa Hortman and her husband, occurring in June 2025 in their very own home, was thrown behind society far too fast. President Donald Trump would post a proclamation via the White House ordering all flags to be respectfully lowered at half-staff in memory of Kirk stating, "I also direct that the flag shall be flown at half-staff for the same length of time at all United States embassies, legations, consular offices, and other facilities abroad, including all military facilities and naval vessels and stations."

Questions began to rise after realizing there was not only a lack of response to Representative Hortman's death, but a claim to have not even known her name. "Well, if the governor had asked me to do that, I would have done that, but the governor of Minnesota didn't ask me," President Trump said to the New York Times.

In addition, constant exposure to graphic violence is assisting in the dulling of reactions to similar real-world crime. An increase in violence in video games, movies, shows and even social media causes people - especially young people - to be negatively influenced and affected by the consequences relating to one's own mental health.

Popular internet websites that are often associated with online harassment and disturbing digital content such as 4Chan, Rotten.com and LiveLeak are highlighted to adolescents' curiosity. Studies done by the National Institute of Health support this and show that exposure to violence from a young age can influence aggression in older ages. According to the NIH, "exposure to violent content can decrease empathy and cause increased aggressive thoughts, anger and aggressive behavior."

Exposure to such graphic content is disconnecting people from the reality of crime, to be less reactive of real harm and less concerned to genuine aggression.

When genuine violence begins to become blurred in the eyes of the public, it appears as a reaction to the action verb in a headline rather than the importance of a life. Society shows patterns of mourning in convenience. It's time to stop ignoring the societal cognitive toll from glorified violence, and demand more from our nation than just thoughts, prayers and performative concern.

Check out our online content!

Halloween 101

How to: Give Each Student the Best Halloween Possible

By Leigha Cole, Editor-In-Chief

For the past two years, I've given The Redbird Word playbook a number of informational guides to making the most out of your high school experience. Now that I'm a senior, I've spent my years finding a happy medium between trick-or-treating with my parents and finding myself in an odd crowd on Halloween night. From homecoming, to Valentine's Day, to prom, and more, this is the next unfailing guide on how to have the best Halloween of your life, as a big kid.

Step One: Find your costume. Pinterest is your best friend in finding a good costume for the year. Whether you're looking for something basic or creative, Goodwill and Walmart are great choices while dressing up on a budget. Depending on who you spend the day with, there are plenty of duo, trio and group costume ideas if you're not intending on traveling solo.

Step Two: Make the plans. Planning a group event with your friends can be stressful, especially with larger crowds. Intend on practicing transparency and respect amongst your friends and their boundaries. Some of my favorite ideas would include scary movie marathons, pumpkin carving, gathering at one friend's house or even trick-or-treating.

Step Three: Practice Safety. Many of our parents told us to stop trick-or-treating by freshmen year, or even earlier for some. In this case, I want to confirm that this is my personally preferred way of spending my holiday and it is still completely acceptable.

As long as you're traveling as a big kid, be respectful of a household's decision to deny you. In the instance of staying in with friends, practice responsibility and keep yourselves out of trouble at all costs.

With the holidays making their way into the year, it's imperative that students have the best night ever before the weather gets cold. Teens can do this by staying creative while dressing up, carving pumpkins with your closest friends or embracing nostalgia with trick-or-treating. Keep in mind that it's just another excuse to have fun. Have the mindset that you're not too old and you aren't required to lose interest.

So — before you lose all hope of childhood — go out, have fun and stay safe on the best Halloween of your life.

Check out these local Halloween attractions!

R Acres of Terror
Dow, Ill.

The Darkness Haunted House
St. Louis, Mo.

Creepyworld
Fenton, Mo.

Glazebrook Fall Corn Festival
Godfrey, Ill.

THE LOADING DOCK
ON THE RIVER
GRAFTON - ILLINOIS

Guess Your Homecoming Royalty

Draw a line between the two you think will win homecoming court!

Ja'Kayla Steen

Max Reedy

Kennedy Lacey

Dayshawn Miller

Hayden Scott

Logan Hickman

Kyridas Orr

Jaden Hogan

Kenzie Stark

Hank McClaine

Tiffany Zheng

Grant Ely

Photo by Lily Waltz, Features Editor